

Andrew Jackson to Troops, October 24, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO THE TROOPS.

Camp Deposit, October 24, 1813

Fellow Soldiers . You have, at length, penetrated the country of your enemies. It is not to be believed that they will abandon the soil which embosoms the bones of their fathers without furnishing you an opportunity of signalling your valour. Wise men will not expect it; brave men, will not desire it. It was not to travel unmolested, through, a barren wilderness, that you quitted your families and your homes, and submitted to so many privations: it was to avenge the cruelties committed upon our defenceless, and unoffending frontiers by the inhuman Creeks, instigated by their still more inhuman Allies. You shall not be disappointed. If the enemy fly before us, we will overtake and chastise them. We will track them, how dreadful is the resentment of freemen when once it is aroused. But it is not by boasting, that victory is to be obtained. The same resolution which prompted us to take up arms, must inspire us when we fight. Men thus animated and thus resolved, barbarians, can never conquer; and it is an enemy barbarous in the extreme that we have now to face. Their reliance will be upon the damage they are capable of doing you, whilst you are asleep and unprepared for action. Our centinels must never sleep, nor our soldiers be unprepared. But while our centinels are strictly enjoined to watch with unwinking vigilance, the approach of the enemy, they are at the same time commanded not to fire upon *shadows* . Imaginary danger must not deprive them of entire self-possession. Our soldiers must lie with their arms in their hands: and the moment an alarm is sounded they

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must move to their respective positions without noise and without confusion. They will thereby be enabled to hear the orders of their officers; and to obey them with promptitude.

Great reliance will also be placed by the enemy, in the consternation they shall be able to spread through our ranks, by the horrid yells with which they commence their battle; but brave men will laugh at the subterfuge by which they hoped to alarm them. It is not by hollowing and screams that death is inflicted; and you will hail their bellowing approach, by a substantial salute with the bayonet; what Indian ever stood the charge of the bayonet: what army of any nation ever withstood it long? The history of warfare furnishes no instance! The order for the charge with the bayonet, will be the signal of victory. Your general has pledged his reputation upon it; and he is willing to add the farther pledge of his life. When you are ordered to fire, obey the command, with deliberation and aim; and when you are ordered to charge proceed to the assault with a quick step, and without trepidation or alarm. Victory will then be certain; nor will the danger in doing so, be, by any means, equal to what men unacquainted with battles, may suppose [*sic*] it. It is not in assailing an enemy that men are destroyed; it is when they are retreating and in confusion. Your general laments, that he has been compelled even incidentally, to use the word retreat. Never while he commands you shall you have any practical understanding of that word. Shall an enemy who are wholly unacquainted with military evolution, and who are destitute of the arms necessary for effective warfare—an enemy who rely, more, for victory, upon their grim visages, and hideous yells than upon their bravery, or their weapons— *shall* they ever drive before them the youth of Tennessee whose bosoms pant to signalise their bravery and who have moved forth to avenge their country's wrongs. Your general will not live to behold such a spectacle. Rather would he rush into the thickest of the enemy and submit his head to their scalping knives. But he has no fears of such a result. He knows the valour of the men he commands; and he knows that, that valour will ensure victory. With his soldiers he will face the danger of the enemy; and with them he will participate the glory of a conquest.